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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the nature and function of leadership in the management of postsecondary educational institutions. It explains the need for studying educational leadership and reviews various theories on the nature of leadership. These include the trait, situational, social influence, functional (or action-centered), contingency, contextual, and strategic leadership theories. The paper then examines the transformational or empowering leadership cycle, which can serve as a model for educational leadership. This cycle emphasizes vision, action, and reflection. Finally, the paper discusses four dimensions of educational leadership: symbolic, political, managerial, and academic. (Contains 26 references.) (MDM)

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Mendip Papers

Leadership and its functions in further and higher education

D T Marsh

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Introduction

This Mendip Paper surveys the key concepts concerning the behaviour we label as 'leadership', and explores its role in the management of further and higher education. It recounts briefly the hypotheses held about the nature of leadership, suggests a number of models (or maps) which are relevant to the education manager, and suggests how the role, and its expectations, of a leader may be most effectively played. At the end of the paper are references and a selected bibliography.

Why do we need to consider leadership?

The recent focus in education management has been on the three Es of Economy, Efficiency, and Effectiveness, measured by sets of performance indicators. However, there are another three: Excellence, to which some attention is paid in terms of 'quality', Envisioning, and Ethos. The first three are primarily concerned with management and administration; the last three are the concern of leadership.

When talking in broad terms about 'management', we need also to refer to leadership: there is a connection. Leadership certainly seems to be part of management: a sub-set of specific skills, qualities, attitudes, flair, and action. There is an expectation in those being managed that somewhere, effective leadership should be exercised and visible. Without it, management seems sterile.

In our personal models of managers we may see them as policemen, referees, devil's advocates, dispassionate analysers, or decision-makers; as saying 'yes' or saying 'no', stopping, starting, controlling, and as administrators of the processes set up by institutions. Our models of leaders, on the other hand, will be perhaps of cheer leaders, enthusiasts, hero finders, nurturers of champions, coaches, facilitators, builders, exciters, and the ones who get us out of trouble and into new pastures. Managers are wealth consumers; leaders are wealth creators. Management appears to be about path following and doing the right things, whilst leadership is about path finding and doing things right.

Managers are appointed; so, too, are leaders. Whereas being appointed a manager in one sense makes us one, being an appointed leader certainly does not make us into a leader. Indeed, the first task of an appointed leader is survival - not to lose the leadership position. Frequently, appointed leaders forget that the responsible leader is the one who is accountable, the effective leader the one who is widely taken up, and the psychological leader is the one with whom we most identify emotionally; these three aspects of leadership are not necessarily invested in the same person. We generally do what managers require, but we always follow good leaders.

Our expectations of the 'leader in manager' suggest that. We follow those who have vision; who have ways of reaching desired, mutually perceived outcomes; who get people to do worthwhile things whether they particularly want to or not; and who can resolve those issues others cannot. Research by McGregor (1966) suggests that followers require seven things of leaders (or managers who exercise leadership):

1. to create the appropriate and most effective atmosphere in which to achieve the task;
2. to possess knowledge essential to the followers for task achievement;
3. to give forewarning of any major change likely to occur;
4. to uphold and enforce discipline; to do so fairly, consistently, and without favour (i.e. to establish and hold clear boundaries);
5. to provide, as far as possible, physical and psychological security;
6. to empower people to participate;
7. to give people responsibility and authority for tasks delegated to them.

We also know that when we are appointed leader of a group, be it course team, chair of an academic board sub-committee, or working party, the fact subtly alters our relationship with that group. In their eyes, we may be seen as potential controllers and dominators. We will then face a set of defence mechanisms expressed in a wide variety of behaviours from members of the group, for example, resistance, defiance, resentment, hostility, aggression, negativity, ridiculing, submission, blaming, withdrawing, fantasising, forming alliances, and courting favour. This may occur even though we have no intention of using any power and authority. In one sense leadership is already lost; many leaders remain in this situation, functioning after a fashion in spite of that change in relationship.

The second problem, having overcome the first, is to earn a following, to establish influence and to begin to meet and satisfy other people's needs. At one level these are basic: survival to satisfy needs or relieve tensions, and the means to satisfy those needs (food, tools, money, knowledge *et al*). At a higher, more complex level, human beings have a desire to satisfy their needs in relationships with other people, or groups, upon which we rely heavily. Oddly enough, we then find that effective leaders act like good group members, and good group members begin to act like effective leaders. We join and stay with groups if our needs are met; we leave, psychologically or physically, if they are not. We accept the influence and direction of a leader if we regard him or her as a person through whom we will satisfy our needs.

We may leave a group, and a leader, because the leader is not going anywhere interesting, or he/she may upset the group definition of an equitable cost/benefit ratio - getting most of what we need in relation to the amount of energy or cost devoted to the task. We are all familiar with the new leader who, through personal insecurity or an unhelpful conceptual model of leadership, postures as vigilant overseer, upsetting the ratio through over-supervising and becoming a bureaucratic manager by:

- requiring group members to seek approval before sending out letters, implementing

plans, or making decisions;

- requiring detailed activity or progress reports (and reading them);
- taking over tasks ascribed to others to make sure they are 'done properly'; and
- making members go through the leader before making contact with people or institutions outside the group.

In the end such a leader literally becomes a one-person operation. But there can be no leadership without followers. Leaders do not operate from offices because they cannot lead from there (where they would only become managers, who can operate thus): leadership occurs only when other people are about. Administrators need computers and papers; for them, people are problems.

Somehow we know that excellence does not derive from plodding along well-laid and trodden paths. Indeed, creating excellence seems to require six human qualities ensconced in leadership behaviour (Hickman and Silva, 1986):

1. creative insight	from asking the right questions;
2. sensitivity	empathising with the other person's position;
3. vision	about creating the future;
4. versatility	anticipating change, responding with a wide repertoire of options;
5. focus	concentrating on the key decision without being distracted;
6. patience	looking for long-term rather than short-term gains;

Already we can see distinctions between behaviour labelled 'leadership' and behaviour labelled 'management'. They actually co-exist, like the proverbial horse and carriage; you can't have one without the other. Or, to take another song title, 'it ain't what you do, it's the way that you do it'.

What explanations are there of leadership?

There appear to be seven major concepts discernible from the literature on leadership.

The trait theory

The first and possibly oldest analysis of leadership is that it is the property of the individual. Success lies in the possession of a core set of personal qualities and abilities. We all have models, or scripts, concerning our view of leaders, and it is easy to identify those qualities which have either been present or absent in leaders with whom we have had a good or a bad experience. We tend to ascribe success or failure to personal qualities such as integrity, sense of justice, confidence, courage, energy, enthusiasm, creativity, loyalty, bearing, knowledge, decisiveness, etc.

Stodgill (1974) suggests that research demonstrates that leaders, compared with their followers, have better, more or a greater degree of the factors shown in **Figure 1**.

What is interesting in the list is that some factors are within the individual's control (e.g. social activity, speech, appearance, knowledge) and can thus be

Figure 1: Perceived leadership qualities

Height	Responsibility	Scholarship	Social skills
Weight	Integrity	Knowledge	Popularity
Physical powers	Self-confidence	Judgement	Prestige
Appearance	Mood control	Insight	Co-operation
Speech	Socio-economic status	Originality	Initiative
Intelligence	Social activity	Adaptability	Dominance

Stodgill, 1974

developed, while many are not (e.g. height, intelligence, insight) so cannot be developed and against which the individual may only mitigate. Hence, we derive the concept of the charismatic leader, the one who possesses those magical skills and the cognitive capacity with which to influence people and situations.

The concept of an ideal set of traits still lies at the centre of many processes of selection for posts or promotion. But the trait theory may not be very helpful since it raises a number of questions which are difficult to answer satisfactorily. Can the qualities be identified? How do we measure them? If we can measure them, for example, by tests, are the tests robust predictors of future skills and achievement? What is the ideal set of qualities? It is impossible to find any significant degree of agreement in lists produced by various organisations.

Indeed, the opinion is still held in some quarters that these qualities are socially, if not genetically, transmitted, so that leaders can only emerge from certain social groups or from certain kinds of educational processes. The trait theory is pessimistic for those who do not possess these qualities since few of them can be acquired by training (so how do we train leaders?), and the probability is that no single set of abilities is characteristic of all successful leaders. Investigation of successful leaders can soon lead to the conclusion that many did not possess any of the desired sets and that most were mavericks.

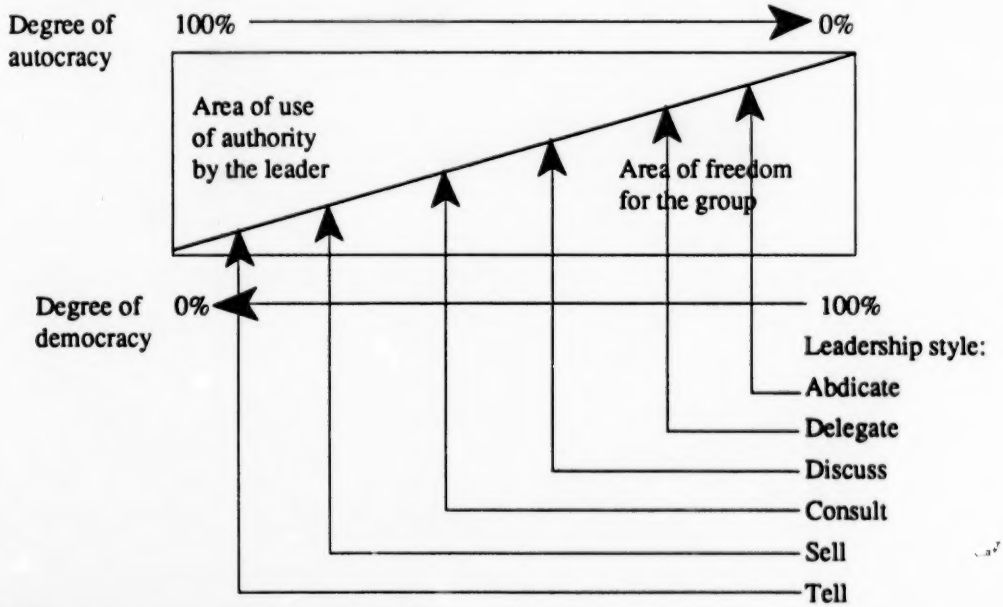
A further issue is that since leadership depends upon having a following, most of these qualities are essential also for the follower. The ideal qualities for a leader are the ideal qualities for the follower as well, so it is not a helpful theory in establishing (or training for) leadership.

Finally, are the desired core traits the same for all situations? History is full of people who were successful in one situation, but failed in another. So perhaps leadership has something to do with the circumstances of the situation requiring leadership.

The situational theory

Different circumstances require different characteristics, approaches, and interactions. Leadership effectiveness is therefore a function of leadership style. We know that leadership is somehow a connection between the leader and the group. A simple model, based on the Harvard Business School continuum (Tannenbaum and Schmidt, 1958), suggests that the effective leader adopts a style, or set of behaviours, along a continuum ranging from one extreme -

Figure 2: Leadership styles and levels of responsibility



Adapted from Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1958)

authoritarianism - to another extreme of *laissez-faire*, or even abdication (see **Figure 2**).

There are two problems raised by the idea of flexibility of response by the leader according to a situation, ranging from circumstances which require the leader to be authoritarian and autocratic in order to achieve results, to the total delegation of responsibility and authority to the group in order to achieve results and to gain the commitment of the group to those results.

The first is that most human beings operate in a narrow band of behaviours. Few use the wide repertoire which may be available to them or are as skilled in one part of the continuum as in others - we usually have a preferred best set of behaviours. Secondly, we have that preferred set largely due to our personality. On the one hand, there are extreme authoritarian personalities (Adorno *et al*, 1950) and on the other, open-minded as opposed to closed-minded personalities ('personality' refers here to all those attributes generally measured by psychometric tests).

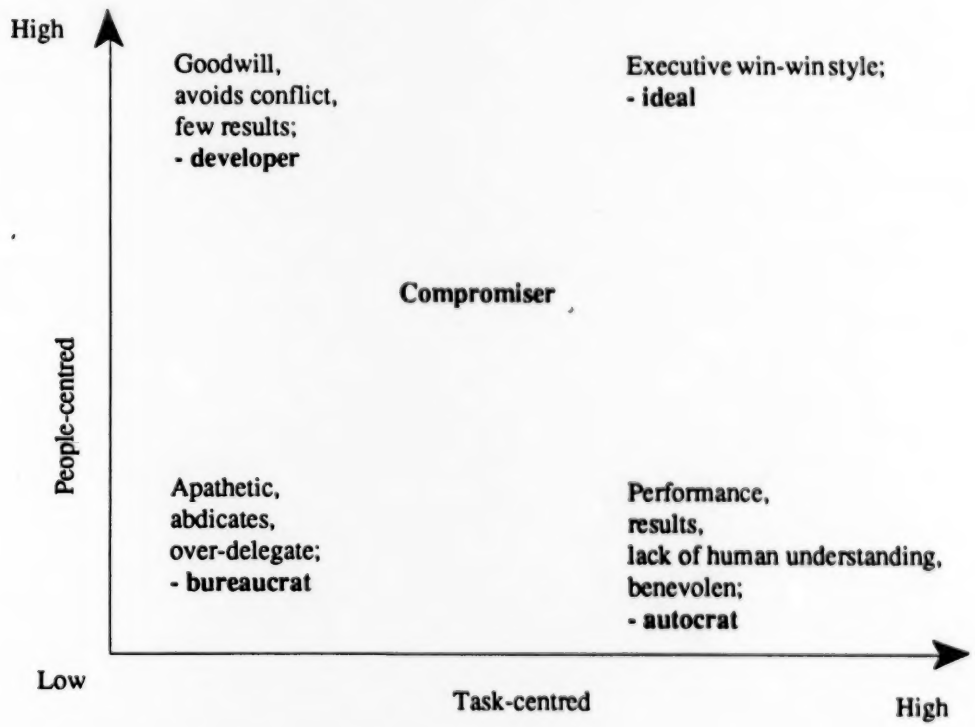
For example, some people are basically task oriented, while others are people and relationships oriented, producing the dilemma every leader faces at some time of how best to reconcile the two in certain situations. According to how we respond, we may be said to have a leadership style. Blake and Mouton (1964) and Reddin (1987) identify the five major styles as set out in **Figure 3**.

Some followers will respond to one style; others will not. So perhaps leadership is principally a social process.

The social influence theory

Leadership is a term describing a relationship. It is about getting things done through other people, and part of the requirement of leadership, if it is to be

Figure 3: Leadership styles and orientation



Blake and Mouton (1964) and Reddin (1987)

exercised effectively, is the possession of power and authority.

In education this is a vexed question since leaders possess an esoteric form of power and authority in its legitimate form. Some powers are laid down by Acts of Parliament, Department of Education and Science (DES) Circulars, local education authority delegation, and the articles and instruments of government in colleges and polytechnics. But these are limited, unclear in certain respects and surrounded with difficulties so that it is often ambiguous on what basis of power and authority (if any) a leader may act. Hence education leadership is generally exercised through varying forms of power.

Referent: the kind of power an individual is able to exercise simply because he or she is the person he or she is.

Expert: leadership can be exercised with the group through the leader's possession of specialist knowledge and skills not otherwise available to the group.

Reward: influence is exerted because the leader has in his or her control rewards which groups and individuals would like: these may be real, such as pay and promotion, or psychological, as in status, autonomy, intrinsic job interest and the ability to influence decision-making.

Coercive: the leader has the authority and power to coerce others into work by withholding reward or giving some form of punishment (e.g. an awkward timetable, a difficult group).

Moral: the leader can exert moral pressure to conform through personal power, or perhaps through group norms, and appeal to people's morality (e.g. for the good of the students).

Dynastic: today little of this remains, though some people may have power through long connections with the institution or local authority beyond their position.

How these forms of leadership are exerted will determine other leadership styles - the 'efficiency expert', the 'social engineer', the 'organisational engineer', the 'change agent', or the 'politician'. In the social exchange and influence concept, leadership is the capacity to influence people beyond legal approval to gain commitment, and a capacity to influence people to strive for a mutually acceptable goal. This is sometimes referred to as transformational or inspirational leadership where the leader influences other people because he/she can make clear and manage well six aspects of the needs of the group and the leader. They are:

1. the meaning of the institution, its objectives and its business;

2. the symbolic presentation of the required impression both to the institution and the outside world;

3. the meeting of mutual expectations of interaction between the leader, the group and the task;

4. the creation and maintenance of participation and involvement;

5. the provision of the necessary intellectual stimulation; and

6. the clear possession and articulation of a vision which meets everybody's needs and is to their satisfaction.

Within colleges critical issues may be those concerned with who holds power, who wields it and in what ways to what ends, along with precisely where and when a leader can exert influence. These lead to another concept an educational leader might do well to examine carefully; the question not only of where and when leadership can be exercised effectively, but also of what the leader can actually do on those relatively sparse and public occasions. Since education clearly does not totally work through leaders exercising strong power and authority, another explanation of leadership in this context is required.

Figure 4: Leadership - the three areas

Based on Adair (1987) **Developing leaders.**

The functional, or action-centred leadership theory

Leadership is a set of identifiable functions, tasks and behaviours which can be learned like any other skill. On this basis, Adair (1973, 1983, 1988) suggests a model of leadership based on a set of tasks to carry out and balance, within three areas of needs - of the task, the team, and the individual (see **Figure 4**).

Leadership may therefore be carried out effectively by following a check list of things to do, or to ensure that happen, and to create an environment in which the leader and the group can achieve any given task. It is 'person free', unlike the trait or social exchange theories, and suggests that effective leaders can be trained to do things. What the leader can do is more important than who or what the leader is. **Figure 5** outlines the range and type of questions a leader should ask in order to be effective.

To some, this may seem a mechanistic approach. There is, after all, something about the personality and presentation of self by a leader which we know from experience does make a difference. Also, to maintain a balance between the three areas will be difficult for those who are task-centred, or formalistic or sociocentric as opposed to egocentric, and it may well be that certain situations might become more problematic by trying to maintain the balance, particularly in crises.

Perhaps a more appropriate model might lie in the concept of competence rather than behaviour, in that an effective leader needs to be competent (in the sense of a continuous, above-average performance which consistently produces results). Within the sphere of management, leadership is a necessary competence cluster in particular circumstances, an idea developed by Boyatzis (1982) as outlined in **Figure 6**.

Whilst this, too, may not provide all the answers, there may be something in all the theories so far.

Figure 5: Questions for the effective leader to ask

Based on Adair, 1973

TASK

Purpose	Am I clear what the task is?
Responsibilities	Am I clear about these?
Objectives	Have I agreed these with my boss for the group?
Programme	Have I worked out a programme to reach the objectives?
Working conditions	Are these right for the job?
Resources	Are these adequate (authority, money, materials)
Targets	Has each member clearly defined and agreed them?
The boss	Does everyone know to whom s/he is accountable?
Group size	Is it too large? Can it be made smaller?
Authority	Is the line of authority clear?
Training	Are there any gaps in the group's abilities?
Priorities	Have I planned the time?
Progress	Do I check this regularly and evaluate?
Supervision	In case of absence who covers?
Approach	Do I do this against set standards?
Example	Do I set standards by my behaviour?

TEAM

Objectives	Does the group understand them?
Standards	Do they know what is expected?
Quality	What standards are acceptable?
Safety	Do they know the consequences of infringement?
Size of group	Is the number correct?
Personality	Are the right people working together?
Team spirit	Is the job structured to encourage this?
Discipline	Are the rules seen to be reasonable? Am I impartial?
Grievances	Are these dealt with promptly? Is there a formal procedure?
Consultation	Is this genuine - encourage and welcome ideas and suggestions?
Briefing	Is this regular?
Trade unions	Does the group know the organisation's attitude?
Group representatives	i.e. union, association. Do they have facilities to be effective?
Back up	Am I prepared to represent the feelings of the group when required? Do I visit people at their work?

INDIVIDUAL

Targets	Have these been quantified?
Induction	Does s/he really know the organisation?
Achievement	Does s/he know her/his work contribution?
Responsibilities	Has s/he got a job description?
Authority	Does s/he have sufficient for the task?
Training	Has adequate provision been made?
Recognition	Do I emphasise people's successes? In failure, is criticism constructive?
Growth	Does s/he see the chance of development?
Performance	Is this regularly reviewed?
Reward	Are work capacity and pay in balance?
The task	Is s/he in the right job?
Personality	Do I know the person well?
Time/attention	Do I spend enough with individuals - listening, developing, counselling?
Grievances	Are these dealt with promptly?
Security	Does s/he know about pensions, redundancy etc.?
	Do I visit people at their work?

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Figure 6: Elements of an integrated model of management

Competency clusters	Functions	Elements in the organisational environment
Goal & action management cluster Leadership cluster	Planning	Strategic planning process Business planning process Related climate: clarity, standards
Goal & action management cluster Leadership cluster Human resource management cluster	Organising	Organisation design Job design Personnel planning process Selection and promotion process Succession planning and career pathing systems Job evaluation system Financial resource allocation process Related climate: responsibility, clarity, standards
Goal & action management cluster Directing sub-ordinates cluster Human resource management cluster	Controlling	Product & business unit, performance review process Individual performance review process Compensation and benefits system Related climate: rewards, clarity, conformity
Human resource management cluster Leadership cluster Directing subordinates cluster	Motivating	Training and development system Compensation and benefits system Career planning process Management information system Related climate: team spirit, rewards
Human resource management cluster Focus on others cluster Leadership cluster	Co-ordinating	Public relations programme Grievance procedures Cross-functional and inter-departmental co-ordinating processes Climate: team spirit, clarity

Boyatzis, 1982

The contingency theory

Effective leadership is probably a function of four variables:

1. the personality cluster of the leader and his or her learned behaviour;
2. the predispositions, expectations, skills and personality clusters of the followers;
3. the organisation, its structure, function, tasks, and the situation it faces (leadership in a matrix organisation, for example, might be different from that in a hierarchy, or leadership in a growth stage is different from that of a decline stage in the institution);
4. the milieu, that is the climate, ethos, and values expressed within the institution.

Education organisations certainly have a very different climate, culture, set of values, philosophies, processes and rituals from a hospital, car factory, or an advertising agency. Handy (1989) actually suggests that colleges and universities provide a model of management for the organisations of the 90s involved with information, intelligence, and ideas. The differences, and the esoteric nature of further and higher education (the specific systems context), may well fashion the nature and shape of leadership exercised. Each institution will also have its own way of doing things which may limit or empower effective leadership.

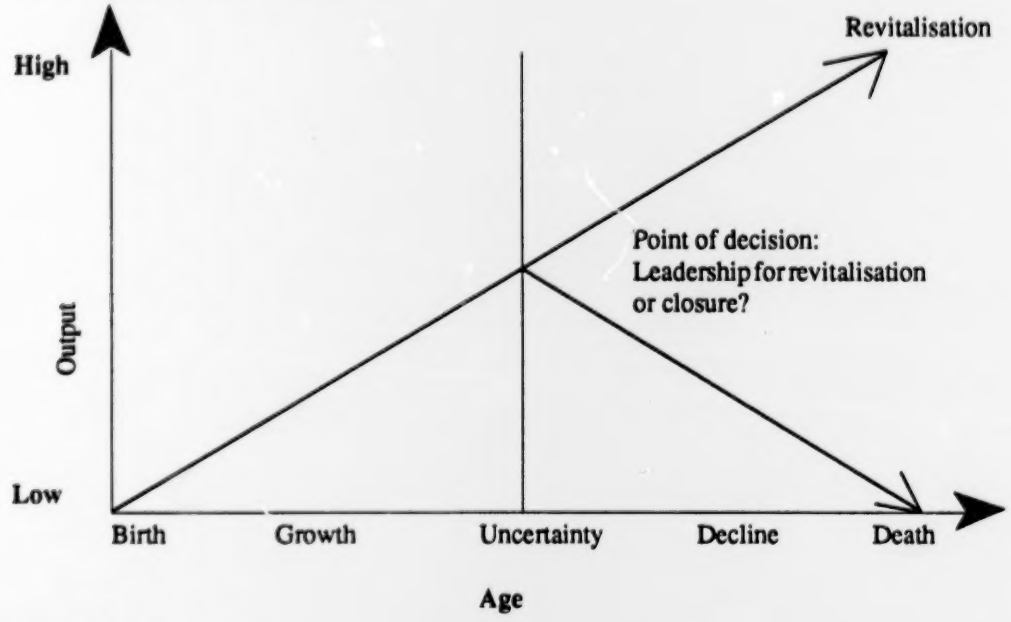
Further and higher education colleges would do well to examine whether their climates are characterised within the two polarities of A or B and ensure leadership moves from A towards B (see **Figure 7**).

Figure 7: Polarities of climate

Climate A	Climate B
Under threat, defensive activities, internal fighting, delaying, withdrawing, putting off key decisions, flight from reality of position, denial, aggressive leaders, over-supervision, autocratic styles, perception of change as a personal threat, fantasising, scapegoating, 'busyness' rather than purposeful activity.	Buoyant, openness, honesty, trust, sharing, facing facts, operating 'superteams', co-operation with and for each other with people working well because they are involved, committed, participating, they share ownership of problems and successes, the work, tasks; they have their needs met and they act, i.e. get things done.

Education has its fair share of organisational people problems; some are place-bound (the 'locals', the 'home-guards', and the 'elders'), while others are career-bound (the 'outsiders', the 'empire builders', the 'cosmopolitans'). Probably the critical task facing any education leader today is re-energising those whose careers are finite, those who are on a mid-career plateau, and those nearing retirement. Add to this the possible 25 per cent decline in further and higher education (unless it finds new business), and we have a context-specific system of alarming condition. Finally, there is the problem of the life-stage of an institution (see **Figure 8**), and the problem that at different life-stages different forms of leadership need to be exercised (Hunt *et al*, 1988).

Figure 8: Life-stages of an institution



Hunt, 1988

The contextual theory

If we take into account all the variables so far mentioned, we have a complex interrelationship of nine major variables which, if not explaining leadership behaviour, certainly identify key areas of which any leader must be constantly aware and appraising. This may be called the contextual theory in which effective leadership is seen as a function of sets of specific contexts and their interrelationships, as summarised in **Figure 9**.

The strategic leadership theory

Arising out of contextual approaches is the issue of strategic leadership, a concept of leadership which implies that at high organisational levels a specific set of knowledge, skills and values characterise leadership. This suggests that strategic leadership is not simply leadership practised in the area of strategic management, but involves extra skills. Ansoff (1979) characterises strategic management as all those activities which create perception of the common purposes of an organisation, and the ways to obtain them by giving concrete content to that vision in stating common aspirations and taking strategic actions which can meet those aspirations. Strategic leadership is the influence on strategic behaviour which contributes to the survival and success of an organisation.

Stumpf (1988) argues that the tools and models of strategic management, while useful for analytical purposes, are rarely implemented in practice:

> Strategic management skills are a necessary set of behaviours and cognitions that link people and analytical models in an effort to affect organisational performance. Having good analytical concepts alone is not likely to lead to organisational effectiveness. The concepts must be applied continuously in a learning-as-you-go process. This continual, non-linear and iterative application of strategic management concepts requires an incremental set of skills beyond the core managerial competencies of informing, planning, organising, clarifying roles, motivating, delegating, leading and controlling. These incremental skills are the six strategic management skills.
>
> Stumpf, 1988.

Figure 9: Leadership contexts and their interrelationships

These six skills are as follows.

1. **Knowing the business and the markets**

   To lead strategically in a college it is not enough to know part of the business or some functional areas such as finance, resourcing, or delivery methods, but rather to understand the whole organisation, how the parts come together to accomplish college goals, and what it is that the customers, sponsors, and other stakeholders want now, and in years hence. Strategic leaders are in touch with trends in the environment (social, economic, political, demographic, technological) and ask searching questions that link the present with the future about trends, consequences of past actions, and consumer needs, which can generate new options.

2. **Managing sub-unit rivalry**

   Effective strategic management involves the diagnosis of conditions of rivalry, and managing the interpersonal conflict inherent in complex organisations. Colleges are far more complex than they were 10 or 15 years ago. Their range of products, services and other opportunities has increased as the profile of their market has become more complex. Parts of the college may compete for resources and for customers (e.g. Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) with A level, for rooms and equipment), and for attention from the management. Some rivalries and conflicts are productive and creative (e.g. increasing the rate of participation), while others are damaging (e.g. expending too much energy in fighting, to produce the same total number of students for the college). The skill is to identify which is which as changes such as mergers, tertiary reorganisations, or a change of name - or even ownership - and character take place, and to handle the rivalry so that it functions within boundaries and is productive. This requires active management and leadership of inter- and intra-departmental communications and relations, along with clear, agreed organisational objectives.

3. **Finding and resolving problems**

   Leaders are frequently required to handle and resolve problems as they arise. Strategic leaders, on the other hand, are preoccupied with diagnosing issues before they become problems, and before they become apparent to anyone else. Strategic leaders are good at identifying and removing obstacles to problem resolution and at seizing opportunities.

4. **Staying on strategy**

   To be able to stay with a strategy requires a strategy. Strategic planning on its own is insufficient; the main elements of the plan need to become part of the thinking of all staff. Primarily, strategy depends upon having a vision articulated as a mission with a clear idea of what is essential for the college to thrive and survive (critical success factors) with key strategies for income, growth, market share, Total Quality Management (TQM), staff selection, retention, and development. The shared strategy informs the day-to-day activities and helps to decide which opportunities to take, since taking those which do not fit into the vision and the college's strengths contribute little to the college's competitive advantage and are seldom within the target market, producing a drain on the college and obscuring the mission and strategy. However, some opportunities arise which may indicate that the chosen strategy is faulty, and deciding whether or not that opportunity is a diversion or a prompt to recast strategy is frequently a strategic leader's key decision.

5. **Being an entrepreneurial force**

   Strategic leaders champion innovative ideas, often in the face of resistance, scepticism, risk, and even hostility. The ability to think creatively, to enthuse and excite others, and to invest energy in innovation distinguishes strategic leaders from managers.

6. **Accommodating adversity**

   The ability to learn from failure rather than ignore it or spend energy in feeling guilty or angry features in successful strategic leaders. This ability is closely linked with a capacity to cope with uncertainty and ambiguity.

Stumpf assumes that much that is usually listed as leadership skill - style, motivation, co-ordination, is incorporated within these six skills. However, how leaders operate varies enormously; strategic leaders may operate esoterically but they achieve similar effects.

Ansoff (1979) argues that strategic leadership

requires a combination of three sets of behaviours, as follows.

1. Legitimising leadership

This is the process of establishing the purposes of the college - its *raison d' etre* - and setting the criteria for its success. Hence, strategic leaders identify the key attributes on which success or failure can be judged, and the degree of determination with which aspirations will be pursued. They also determine the degree of freedom or limitations on the products, services, markets and business conduct of the college, as well as determining the power configuration that will guide it.

2. Decision leadership

The key strategic choices are those of establishing realistic levels of aspiration, selecting suitable strategic thrusts, and making specific moves.

3. Action leadership

An effective strategic leader makes things happen. To achieve this, the leader has to possess the capabilities to create a climate to support strategic activity, mobilise management into strategic decision-making, influence staff to carry out decisions, and co-ordinate and control work.

The three main types of strategic leader are defined as the statesman politician, the visionary entrepreneur, and the charismatic doer. The personality and aspirations of a strategic leader must match specifically the assigned role in the college at that point in time. Someone right for the developments which took place in the 80s in one area might not be right for the 90s in another place. Handscombe and Norman (1989) argue that for the 90s the two most important tasks will be the need to establish strategic alliances with key customers or clients, and the need for integrated strategies to use effectively relevant technologies. Again, the key skills are those of bringing vision to the future business, being able to motivate all the staff to support and achieve that vision, and developing colleagues in the management team to use their strategic skills effectively. This is what Peters (1988) and Hickman and Silva (1986) have been arguing as the way forward. Generally, it would appear that an effective and inspirational strategic leader will require 10 capabilities:

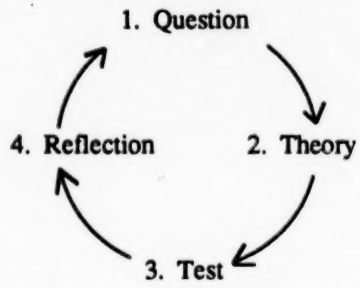
1. to have competence in all strategic operations processes;
2. to use a strategy-led style for managing change;
3. to lead multi-disciplinary decision making;
4. to use effectively relevant technologies;
5. to define the actions needed to meet customers' strategic needs;
6. to manage skilfully all those who have a stake in the business;
7. to play a leading role in implementing strategy;
8. to use a decision-driven style of management and leadership;
9. to participate in designing and developing management team capabilities; and
10. to take a personal involvement in developing senior staff.

It may be noted that these concepts of strategic leadership bear close relationship to the maps already outlined, differing in a few significant areas. This suggests that strategic leadership is somehow concerned with leadership and management at the level of, for example, principal or director, and the post-Education Reform Act structures of government. However, Handy (1989) argues that in the future, with some 'upside-down thinking', colleges - like other organisations - will move towards federalism, with a core of permanent staff and a cluster of people and other organisations to whom specialist work will be contracted out. In that kind of structure, leadership is a skill required at every level. The concept of strategic leadership as being different from tactical leadership may be artificial since strategic leadership may well be exercised at different strata throughout the organisation.

There is a need to develop a model of leadership which encompasses all the theoretical strands outlined, and which is of practical use within the specific context of further and higher education. Since education leadership is primarily concerned with the technologies of learning, and colleges are in the business of selling learning opportunities, a model of leadership based on learning would be both appropriate and applicable. Handy (1989) offers a basic concept of the learning organisation (adapted from Kolb, 1984) which offers an entry

into designing a model suitable for education (see **Figure 10**).

Figure 10: The wheel of learning



The wheel of learning starts with a question, a problem to be solved, a dilemma to be resolved, a challenge to be met. Learning is discovery, but discovery does not happen unless the organisation is looking: 'Necessity may be the mother of invention, but curiosity is the mother of discovery' (Handy, 1989). Questions needs possible answers or theories, a stage of speculation, free thinking, reframing, looking for clues. However, theories have to be tested or they remain wishful thinking; only then, on reflection, can change occur because we know why something has happened, or not happened, and the learning leads us back to new questions. To be stuck at any one point, so that learning never really occurs, ensures leaders and organisations remain 'auditors', or 'bad academics', or 'action men' or 'pundits'. Most of the time organisations do not go through all four stages, emphasising how difficult true learning is and why the sort of deliberate change that goes with learning is so rare.

The final concept offered here as a useful model of leadership derives from this view of learning, change and growth - the cycle of vision, action, and reflection.

Transformational or empowering leadership cycle: a model for education

For the education leader, the curriculum and its development is the key focus of all activity. Any other activity, however essential, is only supportive of the primary business of learning. Wisdom is not hierarchically distributed; education leadership is essentially a social process, empowering others beyond competence to excellence. The academic leader is one who has vision, who puts that vision into action to get things done, and then reflects on that action in order to re-shape or re-energise that vision before continuing the cycle (see **Figure 11**).

Vision

Vision encompasses a cluster of competencies together with a less tangible quality of flair. It starts with a process of reframing the present into a view of the future with clear knowledge of where to go, what will be the results of that journey, and how its successful completion will be measured. This future derives from a philosophy, a set of values and beliefs which are an integral part of the leader as a human being. He or she must be able to communicate that philosophy and future view in a way which is unhampered by faulty logic or imprecise language so that all staff may be influenced to share the meaning of the vision and be willing to co-operate in its achievement. In that communication the leader must also be able to listen to others, and to enrol them in what they will see as an exciting, fun journey which will also meet their individual and corporate needs.

The visionary leader is usually a creative 'right brain' thinker, who may also take apparently irrational steps and lateral paths on occasions rather than follow predetermined lines of thought and actions. 'Pathfinding' is sometimes upside-down thinking, sometimes opportunistic, but always looking for learning, and reframing problems as opportunities. This type of leader will frequently surprise people, but will always offer a reward of some kind for taking the journey. Vision is not the prerogative of institutional senior staff but is necessary from the inspirational teacher in the classroom, through the roles of team or course leaders, to middle and senior managers. Indeed, the visionary leader will demand and obtain vision from all staff.

Action

Vision on its own is interesting but useless in the sense that it has no existence until it is carried out. Action requires specific managerial competencies together with a style and flair appropriate to the journey, the people, the situation, and the vision.

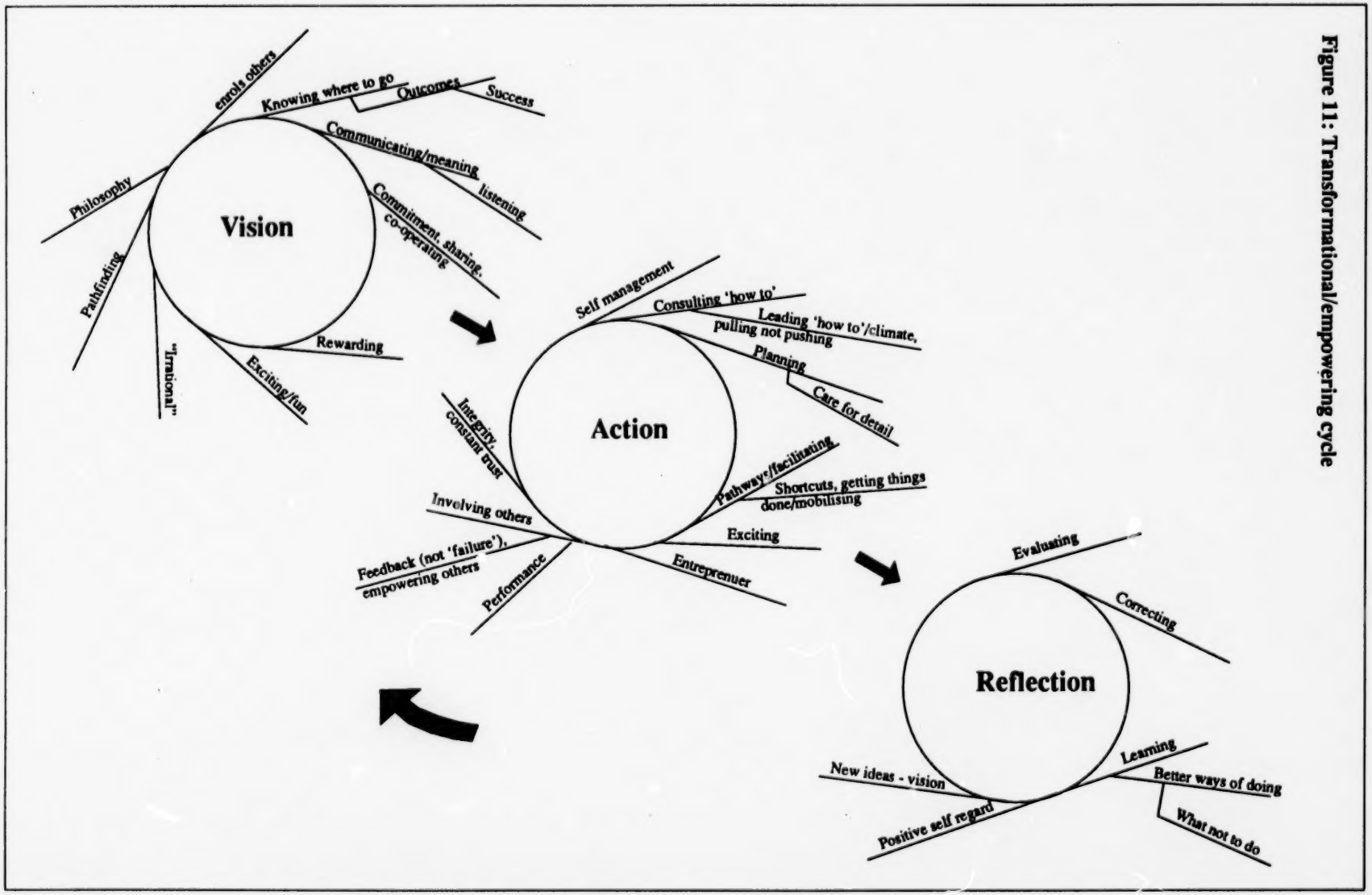


Figure 11: Transformational/empowering cycle

Firstly, it is about creating the right kind of climate. This climate is characterised by behaviour which has integrity and trust at its core, and which operates by involving and empowering others to quality performance. Performance is managed, rewarding achievers and developing under-achievers using feedback which emphasises that there is no such thing as failure, only learning. Self-management and self-development is encouraged at every level (the visionary leader is excellent at doing both for him or herself). Planning is broad, yet at the same time takes care of detail. Pathways are discovered by using leadership which is pulling rather than pushing, consulting and leading in how to do things; facilitating others to seek short-cuts; getting things done (rather than talking about them), and mobilising the full potential of everyone. Secondly, action is always touched by entrepreneurship and, like the vision, is exciting and rewarding.

Reflection

Every piece of action must be followed by reflection. Action is evaluated. Evidence is collected and examined to see what it may tell us about better ways of doing things, what not to do in future, including identifying 'tweaks' to the system which will correct drifts from the vision and its implementation. The visionary leader can do this profitably and without fear because he or she has a positive self-regard. Mistakes, failure to achieve targets, conflict, resistance etc. are not seen as ego threatening, but great opportunities to learn how to get things done better next time. He or she will not hesitate, in the light of reflection, to adjust or even radically alter the vision. Thus, a cycle of vision, action and reflection is triggered again and creates a self-regenerating college in which its management is in tune with its business - learning. Such is the origin of quality.

Quality

A quality college in the 90s will probably, at every level:

- do its own recruiting, hiring, personnel evaluation and firing;
- continuously acquire new skills and train its staff;
- formulate and track its own budgets;
- make capital investment as needed;
- constantly monitor and control its quality standards (or those of BS5750), inspection, and trouble-shooting;
- suggest and develop new products and businesses;
- work on the improvement of everything all the time;
- develop and ensure its own detailed standards for productivity, quality and improvement and make them tough;
- be student centred and 'upside-down' from the orientation of the 80s.

Peters (1988) suggests that these activities will not leave much for management to do. A college like this cannot be run by command; intelligent organisations have to be run by persuasion and consent. It will require what Handy (1989) calls post-heroic leaders. The heroic leader of the past could do everything, solve every issue, and knew everything; the post-heroic leader asks how every problem can be resolved in a way that develops (or empowers) other people's capacity to handle it. Such organisations do not work if leadership is left to one person: everyone has to be capable or nothing happens. The post-heroic leader lives vicariously, getting his satisfaction from other people's successes. The transformational or empowering leadership cycle seems to offer the most useful map for the leader's journey into the future.

Some aspects of education leadership

Most people working in further and higher education have internalised scripts which they either own as individuals, or find ascribed to them, and which tend to determine the cultural climate of the institution, particularly in how it is managed. There are four scripts which are highly influential.

1. Personal models of leaders and leadership which generate expectations and behaviours which may or may not be appropriate and effective.

2. A college has organisational scripts which it transmits, about itself, its history, and the way in which it conducts its business, reflected in its climate, processes, styles, messages to its members (staff and students) and rivals.

3. A college will have a script about its industry, i.e. about education, teaching and learning, and its interactions with other organisations in the same kind of business.

4. It will also have an environmental script about the way in which it perceives the outside world and handles its boundary transactions (i.e. with anyone not immediately in the business, its clients, customers, central and local government, external bodies and authorities, and society at large).

Much of the content of these scripts will be unthinking - automatic reflexes carried on by tradition - but stress, in any form, reinforces scripts. Perhaps there is need to rethink scripts. Indeed, there is one current theory about leadership which proposes that in today's climate leadership is about change, at any cost, all the time. The key question for the leader is, 'What have I changed today?' If the answer is 'nothing', then the organisation will die (Peters, 1988). Perhaps the series of shocks administered to further and higher education over the last decade, and which are likely to continue into the next, are actually going to save the system. Being proactive, reactive or responsive may be irrelevant: the one certainty is uncertainty.

Nevertheless, the leader (at every level from the teacher to the principal or director) undoubtedly shapes in four dimensions the character and direction of any college. These four dimensions represent the totality and complexity of leadership in an education context.

1. **Symbolic**

   The leader embodies symbolically the whole institution. Internally he or she pulls others along towards symbolic and actual goals of excellence, quality, success and organic growth. Externally, the leader represents that institution by presenting its corporate image and by obtaining resources.

2. **Political**

   The leader handles effectively the demands of all the constituencies he or she represents, gaining support and handling and using conflict to appropriate ends.

3. **Managerial**

   As a manager, the leader performs the standard tasks of directing, controlling, representing, staffing, planning, structuring, setting goals and communicating. He or she handles budgets, plant, costs, paper processes, industrial relations, external funding and validating bodies. The leader is the chief executive (doing the right things) and exerting as far as possible a steady-state condition in the system.

4. **Academic**

   Academic leadership is about being the 'best professional', leading other professionals in a collegiate style, recognising and encouraging quality; deciding where, when, and how to intervene to strengthen academic structures; coaching, setting example, taking risks, and (contrary to the chief executive role) acting as an agent of change. The leader seeks continuously to bring things together, cope with breakdowns, keep things going, and do new things.

Putting all four aspects together, leadership in college is basically about philosophy and putting philosophy into action. It is a critical and reflective activity, a shared experience, a communal, collegiate act to enable the talents and energies of staff to have as much positive effect as possible. Underlying this approach are three core activities:

1. task achievement of the primary objectives;

2. maintenance of motivation, commitment, interpersonal relationships and the needs of the task, the group and the individual; and

3. organisational change and growth to adapt to the environment by meeting rules, needs, and opportunities.

It is about bringing people to life, not boring them to death.

To reiterate - for the education leader, the curriculum and its development is the key focus of all activity. Any other activity, however essential, is only supportive of the primary business of selling learning opportunities. Education leadership is essentially a social process empowering others beyond competence to excellence. It is for this reason that the vision-action-reflection model is probably the most effective basis for action.

Conclusion

This review of leadership has identified various views of the tasks of leadership and conceptualisations of its role. However, there is very little work which actually tells us how effective leaders behave. What do they actually do to accomplish all these tasks and roles? Do good leaders talk to their staff more? Do they talk to them about their vision and their roles? What do they specifically do to inspire people to follow? Do they spend more time in creative thinking about the present and the future? What, and how precisely do they delegate to others? What is it they do to create a culture supportive of the vision? Do they pay more attention to public performance, the presentation of self, the ritual and dramaturgy of leadership? What do they do which somehow produces insight or the creative act which inspires others to join with them? Are these things we can learn to do?

These, and many other questions need to be researched by investigating what successful leaders do that less successful leaders do not. Perhaps the effective leader is the one who poses these questions and sets about finding answers which can result in action.

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